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LETTER DATED 15 OCTOBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have the honour to forward to you the enclosed statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea issued on 14 October 1998 concerning a new map that has been circulated by the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry to diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa.

I would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Permanent Representative

98-30763 (E) 161098

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Annex

Statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea on 14 October 1998

Ethiopia's new map: deliberate confusion or surreptitious retraction?

Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is circulating a map to the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa. The map has also been widely distributed in schools and other government institutions.

The new map conforms with the international boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia. In that sense, it may be a step in the right direction, as the Ethiopian Government will have rescinded, albeit indirectly, the Tigray administrative map that it issued in October 1997, which carves out, illegally, large chunks of Eritrean territory. Territorial encroachment by Ethiopian troops in July 1997 to occupy Bada and install a new Ethiopian administration there and incessant border markings in the Badme area for the rest of the year were prompted by the desire to create on the ground what was unilaterally delimited in the illegal map of the Tigray administrative region.

But there is a curious snag in the "latest" map too. Badme village is inexplicably displaced and "located" at the centre of "the Yirga triangle" inside Ethiopia which is shaded as "occupied territory".

That Badme village lies inside Eritrea, about 15 kilometres west of the boundary segment between the Mareb and Setit rivers, and was not contested by Ethiopia before. Indeed, the regime in Addis Ababa has been evoking tenuous arguments of "administrative presence" to justify its claims on the territory. At any rate, the accurate location of Badme village can easily be verified on the spot with appropriate equipment. Moreover, Eritrea has never occupied, and does not have any claims on, what is termed now as "the Yirga Triangle". This too can be verified easily by an independent investigation.

Ever since the eruption of the crisis, Eritrea has been insisting that Ethiopia declare, fully and clearly, the totality of its territorial claims. The statement issued by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Government of Eritrea on 14 May, just one day after Ethiopia's Parliament declared war on Eritrea called for "each party to publicly announce to the peoples of Eritrea, Ethiopia and the international community the territories it claims - if any - and designate them on the political map with clear geographical coordinates. Each party shall also accept that the dispute cannot, and should not, be resolved by force but through peaceful negotiations".

Ethiopia has balked at doing so in the past. It refused to submit the totality of its territorial claims to the Organization of African Unity in order to enable the latter to define the scope of the dispute. It also refused to publicly acknowledge or rescind the map that illegally incorporates many parts of Eritrean territory. Now, however, it has fabricated a different map, which purportedly establishes Eritrean "invasion" of Ethiopia.

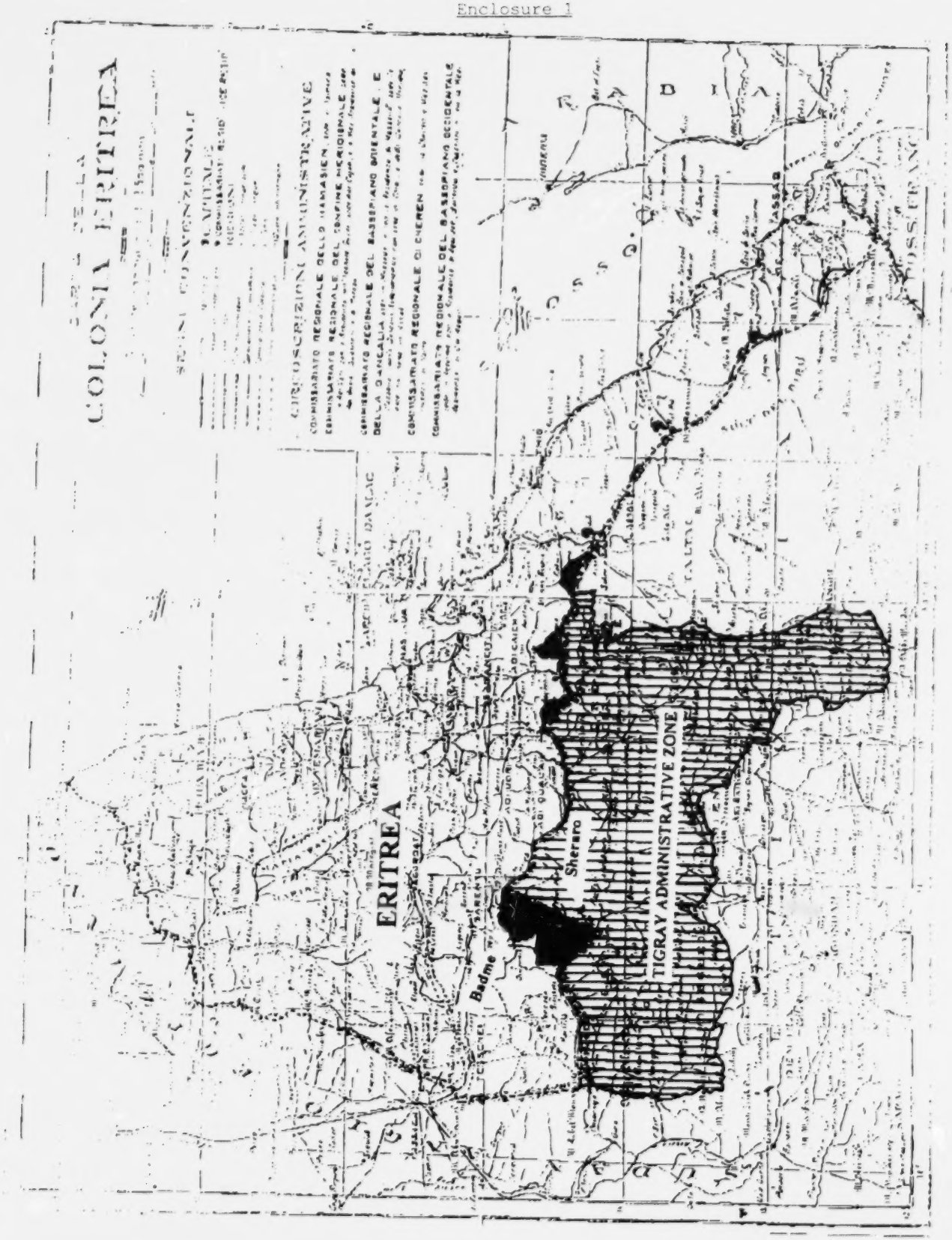
This muddle is deliberate and designed to obscure the cause of the conflict, but the Ethiopian regime cannot get away with this act of transparent duplicity. It must unequivocally and officially rescind the map of the Tigray administrative region that was published by the Mapping Authority of the central Government and express in clear terms that it respects Eritrea's international boundaries, which were established in accordance with the colonial treaties of 1900, 1902 and 1908. For its part, Eritrea asserts categorically that it has not occupied and does not have any claims on "the Yirga Triangle", which can be verified by independent inspection.

Enclosures:

1. The latest map distributed by Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry;

2. Ethiopia's territorial claims on Eritrea in accordance with the 1997 map of Tigray, issued under the auspices of Ethiopia's Mapping Authority.

Enclosure 1


COLONIA ERITREA
ERITREA
TIGRAY ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE
Sheraro
Badme

Enclosure 2

U D A N
ERITREA
RED SEA
Keren
Mitsiwa
Akordat
ASMERA
Barentu
Dekemehare
Gash
Mereb
Adi Keyih
Mendefera
Adi Aw-ala
Mereb
Tekeze
Sheraro
Adi Da-iro
Rama
Adigrat
Humera
Axum
Adwa
Tekeze
inda Silase
E T H I O P I A
Wikro
Abiy Adi
MEKELE
Debark
Dabat
Maychew